

[By Deanna LeBlanc](#)

Congressman Peter Welch hopes a National Guard veteran outreach program in Vermont can expand nationwide.

Welch and New York Congressman Chris Gibson were in Rutland Tuesday to hear from veterans about the reintegration program. It provides Guard members and their families with health care services, plus counseling for marriage, business, and finances, as well as substance abuse treatment.

"Natasha called and she took us from we're going to be sleeping in the Jeep tonight, to 'you'll be sleeping in a hotel.' And with three kids and one on the way she was a Godsend. Getting rid of this program would take families like ours and have them sleeping in their cars," said Anne Elie, a military wife.

"We needed to be able to better prepare our families and soldiers. We need to take care of them while they're overseas and we needed to have some response to when they came back if there were problems. We needed to be able to address those problems," said Deputy Adjutant Gen. Thomas Drew of the Vermont National Guard.

Welch will take what he heard Tuesday to Washington in hopes of expanding the program to Guard veterans across the country, as well as active duty armed forces members.